

ROCK ART AND LANDSCAPE IN THE SOUTH OF PORTUGAL

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RESUMEN

Rock art, considered in a broad sense, which includes the so called megalithic art, shows different and very specific modes, in the South of Portugal, all of them related with different geologic contexts and, subsequently, quite diverse types of landscape.

The schistose rocks display mostly pecked motifs, concentrated in the water polished rocks of the bottom of the biggest rivers: the Tejo and the Guadiana; the most of this manifestations are attributed to the Neolithic/Early Bronze Age period, though, among them, there are also some older (Paleolithic and epi-paleolithic) and younger (Bronze and Iron Age) motifs.

On the quartzite rocks, frequent on the northern part of the region, we find exclusively painted motifs, attributed exclusively to the Neolithic/Early Bronze Age. This rock art group is related with the rock shelters frequent on the quartzite crests of this area.

In the granite regions of the South of Portugal, rock art is very scarce. This is, however, the area where most of the megalithic monuments (specially the standing stones) are located, and some of them display carved motifs, usually with the technique of the bas-relief, with specific motifs. They are attributed to the Early Neolithic period.

Southernmost, in Western Algarve, carved standing stones, with specific motifs (also in bas-relief), are related with a different type of raw material (limestone and sandstone), associated with quite diverse landscapes, in a close relationship with the seaside.

Beyond the technical limitations imposed by the different lithologies, we must consider the different meanings attributed by prehistoric peoples to the different kinds of rock, in a phenomenological sense.